

SCOUNDRELS & CO.

By COULSON KERNAHAN
Author of "Captain Shannon," "A Book of Strange Sins,"
"A Dead Man's Diary," Etc.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

A SCRIMMAGE IN WHICH I PLAY THE PART OF FOOTBALL.

The lights once switched off, I felt that there was not a moment to lose if I wished to be on the spot to get first snatch at the bag when it was tossed through the window.

Walking quietly out, I worked my way unobtrusively to the gate which closed the passage leading to the yard at the back of the hall. Fortunately for me, the hubbub inside the building, and the sudden putting out of the lights, had served to distract the attention of the loungers inside the railings and of the crowd outside, so I was able to open the gate and to slip through unobserved. Closing it si-



"LET ME GO, YOU DOTARD!"

lently after me, I hurried along the passage, but before I had gone a dozen paces I came upon some one walking slowly in the same direction, whom, when he turned on hearing my footsteps, I found to my dismay to be the old care-taker.

"Where are you going, young man?" he inquired gruffly.

Perhaps my momentary hesitation in search of a plausible excuse aroused his suspicion, for when I said that I was only taking an airing, as the heat of the hall had made me faint, he answered, none too gently—

"Then you take a airing somewhere else. These ain't infirmaries grounds, and if you feel faint the best thing you can do is to nip round to the Red Cow and get two pennyworth of brandy."

"Oh, I shall be all right in a minute, my friend, thank you," I said, thinking it best to humor him. "I don't care to go out into the street for the present, it's too crowded; but don't you bother about me, I shall be all right when I've had a stroll round in the air for a few minutes," and with that I essayed to slip past him, being impatient of this unlooked-for blandance.

"Well, you can't stroll round here," he said, barring the way with his bulky figure. "We can't have no strangers along this passage. It's private property; so out you go and sharp."

Finding him thus obdurate, I did what I ought to have done at first, and slipped a coin—half a crown I thought it was—into his hand. His fingers closed upon it in an instant.

"I don't want to be disagreeable when a gentleman ain't feeling quite well," he began. "All the same—Then he stopped disgusted. "Why, it ain't a crown. It's a penny—not so much even as the price of a drink, if you think—"

Just then I heard the bursting of the bomb inside the hall. There was not a moment to lose if I was to secure the bag, so, determining to take by force what had been refused me as a favor, I nudged my shoulder to the caretaker's chest and "charged" him in the good old fashion of the football field.

"Would you?" he shouted. "You rascal! I knew you were after no good!" and catching at my coat collar as I was in the act of passing him, he tried to swing me round, but, losing his balance, fell back heavily on the gravel, dragging me, sprawling over his chest, on top of him. As we went down, a man—it was evidently Hubbock—carrying something in his hand darted round the corner, and jumping lightly over the prostrate pair of us, passed through the gate, which he banged behind him.

"Let me go, you dotard!" I shouted to the care-taker. "Let me go before I strike you. I must follow that man at all costs."

The old fellow was a man of spirit, notwithstanding his years, and held me so stoutly—I could not bring myself to strike him—that some seconds passed before I could shake off his grip.

When at last I managed to wrench myself free and leaped up to follow Hubbock, it was only to find that I had left the frying-pan for the fire.

From the open door of the hall a swaying throng was now surging like devils vomited from the mouth of hell. Some of them must have heard the meaningless cry of "Stop him! stop, thief!" with which the old care-taker nudged my flying figure. All I know is that for the second time that evening I was reminded of my football days, only on this occasion it seemed to me that I was the football and the center of the scrimmage, and that some two dozen of devils—mad for blood, and pounding and bashing at me with hands and sticks, as well as with feet—were the players.

The old man's meaningless cry of "Stop, thief!" had led them, no doubt, to suppose that I was the stealer of the money, and that, if they were only quick enough about it, they might se-

ture the booty for themselves.

It did not take long to undeceive them, for in less than half a minute I hadn't as much as a rag to my back; and I was allowed to drag myself, bleeding, breathless, naked, and trembling in every limb, to a corner, where I lay feeling as one might who had been snatched from the ravening jaws of a pack of hungry wolves.

It was some days before I was sufficiently recovered to journey to Tarrborough to claim my share of the money and to hear how Number Two had fared. I had telegraphed to say I was coming by the three o'clock train, and Hubbock was there with the trap to meet me.

"Well, is the money safe, Hubbock?" I said, as we drove off from the station.

"Yes, sir, I took care of that. Your share is waiting for you all right. Rather cheaply earned, sir, wasn't it?"

"No," I answered, gruffly. "It struck me as rather dear. Where's your master?"

"In bed, sir—what's left of him. And a bad attack, too."

"Attack—what of?"

"A catching complaint, sir. You appear to have suffered from it, too—universal brotherhood, the master calls it. What did you say, sir?"

But what I said about universal brotherhood is not fit for publication.

CHAPTER XIX.

FISTS AND FINGER-NAILS AND HOB-NAIL BOOTS.

Hubbock was quite right in observing that Number Two had had a "bad attack." The poor man's face was patched like an old coat, he wore a green shade over one eye, and was sitting up painfully in bed and as sitting up a sawdust doll.

"How are you, Number Seven?" he said with a feeble smile. "Excuse me not getting up to receive you. I have to move an arm or a leg all of a piece like a pump-handle, and even then I wince and sometimes squeal aloud with pain. How do I look, do you think?"

"Like a stuffed Guy Fawkes on a barrow," would have been my answer had I felt called upon to adhere to the truth. As it was, I answered cheerfully that he was "looking a bit chippy, but that a day or two would no doubt set him on his legs."

"Set me on crutches you mean, don't you?" he groaned. "Oh! what a mauling I've had! The voice of the people may be the voice of God, but how about the people's fists and finger-nails and hob-nail boots? How did you get on?"

"I should have 'got on' well enough," I replied, ruefully. "If only I could have 'got off.' But I couldn't. The people saw me switch the light off, and two or three of them strolled up to interview me after."

"Ah!" he said, trying to screw himself round the better to see me, and grinning hideously, but whether from pain or from gratification at finding a fellow-sufferer I could not say. "Ah! so you, too, have been interviewed by the people, have you? And how did you fare at their hands?"

"It wasn't their hands I objected to so much as their feet," I said. "Tearing one's clothes off one's back and bashing at one's head with half-bricks and sticks may have been only their playfulness. But when it came to knocking a poor devil down and dancing on his stomach, not to speak of kicking him in the ribs, why, then I began to feel that there was such a thing as having too much of the people."

"I believe you," he groaned. "There is such a thing, and I've had it—Lord knows. However, there's one consolation. We did the devil's own of their £5,000, though I wouldn't go through such an experience again for £500,000. Your share's in that writing-desk on the table there. You'll find a bunch of keys in the top pocket of those trousers hanging at the foot of the bed. The little key's the one. Open the desk and take out the parcel with a big 'seven' upon it."

I obeyed, and found, a little to my surprise, but greatly to my satisfaction, that he had not misled me. There, sure enough, was a parcel marked "seven," containing no less a sum than £1,000 in gold and small bank notes.

After I had expressed what he appeared to consider unnecessary thanks, I asked him whether our fellow conspirators were "upstairs."

"No," he said fervently. "They're gone, thank goodness. They were restless to be off as soon as they had pocketed the money; and as the hue and cry about the murder in the shed has blown over, I let them go—one at a time, of course. But talking of the money, I must warn you, as I warned them, not to let any one notice your flush of cash, either by paying it into a bank or by bluing it too prominently. That sort of thing always arouses suspicion, and has led to the discovery of many a crime."

"Have they gone for good, then?" I asked.

"More likely for bad," he laughed. "Crime, like poverty, brings one into strange company. How you, and, for the matter of that, how I came to row in such a galley I can't think. I don't know anything about you personally, Number Seven, for Number One, who 'put you up' for election to the council, didn't take me into his confidence on the subject; but I fancy, as I've said to you before, that you were meant for a gentleman."

Even had there been no note of interrogation—as of one inviting confidence—in his voice, I should have taken the last part of his sentence less as an involuntary compliment than as an intentional "draw" to lead me to talk about myself. Piqued apparently by my non-committal reply of "You're

very kind," he changed the conversation abruptly.

"A meeting of the council is to be held here to-day week at five in the afternoon. Until then I need not burden you with my company, as I have nothing further to discuss. If you choose to remain here until then as my guest, you are at liberty to do so. Or you are at liberty to go. Which is it to be—stay or go?"

Under the circumstances I felt that it had better be "go," and said so.

"Quite so," he assented coolly. "The social attractions of Heath cottage are not, I am aware, great, especially when the host is laid on his back. To-day week, then, we shall have the honor of welcoming you again. If you will come down by the same afternoon train, Hubbock will meet you with the trap. The time and route by which the other two are coming have been arranged. I wish you speedy recovery from your hurts. Good-day!"

"I wish you the same," I said, and so we parted.

CHAPTER XX.

THE MUSICAL BOX THAT PLAYED TWO VERY DIFFERENT TUNES.

Number Two was sufficiently recovered to preside at the reassembling of the syndicate. After greetings had been exchanged and inquiries had been made in regard to his health, he came to the point without further delay.

"Our newly-elected councillor, Mr. Hubbock, who celebrated his advent to the council by successfully accomplishing the carrying off of the money which had been sent from Germany to furnish sinews of war for the dock strike, is apparently not content with that exploit, but is bent upon distinguishing himself still further in the service of the council. He has communicated to me a project which I have promised him to put briefly before you. It is, as you know, most necessary that we should impress our numerous subscribers in this country and in America with our activity. Unless we keep ourselves well before them and before the public, subscriptions will assuredly fall off. Nothing has been done for some time in the way of striking a blow at the monarchy or at the aristocracy, or at any of the other figure-heads which we set up before our own particular public—as a showman sets up the ever-familiar figure of 'Sally'—country fairs—in order that the public may be kept in the service of the council. The public dearly loves some sort of a show, and Sally to shy at, and in a general way the Aunt Sallies are not very much the worse. But a wise showman who wishes to keep the coin coming in, humors his public, and takes care that every now and then one of the many cuds that are thrown shall catch the old lady full in the face, and perhaps bash her features as well as break the pipe in her mouth. That makes the throwers feel that they are getting something for the money, and it keeps the coin coming in."

"Well, we've had two tries at the popular 'Aunt Sallies' lately, and each time we have missed. The first time when we tried to blow up that best-hated man in England, Lord Cranthorpe, and the second was the failure of our jubilee programme for hoisting the queen and the royal family sky high. It wasn't our fault that we failed. We know now, though we didn't then, that our failures were due to treachery, and if any proof were needed that it was so, it is, I think, to be found in the fact that the very first enterprise we undertake, after we have rid ourselves of the traitor, turns out a complete success. If that female Judas who pulled the lynch-pin out of our plans for the blowing up of Lord Cranthorpe's place and for celebrating the jubilee on quite another way than her majesty intended, had been a member of this council when we planned to lay hands upon the £5,000 that was sent to the strikers by many—if she had been a member of the council and in our pockets to-day, we would not be in our pockets to-day."

Number Two paused for breath, and a murmur of unmistakable approval and applause hummed through the room.

"Well, my friends," he went on, "Hubbock has devised a plan for retrieving the failure at Lord Cranthorpe's and the failure at the jubilee. Here it is.

"Some years ago Hubbock was chef at the Ishmael club. Have any of you ever been there? No? Then the Ishmael club, you must understand, is a coterie of travelers, actors, artists, authors, journalists, musicians and so on, who pride themselves on being Bohemians. They are popularly supposed to be in revolt against conventionality of every sort, and in suburban and provincial society a member of the Ishmael club is looked upon as a dreadful upsetter of the order of things and as one who stands for all that is 'advanced' in thought and manners and morals."

"As a matter of fact the members of the Ishmael club—'Brother Ishmaelites,' as they call themselves—are just as sober and solvent and of respect-able, law-abiding, custom-following taxpayers and citizens as you will find outside the precincts of the clubs of actual forage. It is true that the original members who founded the Ishmael club some 50 years ago were a Bohemian harum-scarum lot, but the club as it now stands is simply living on its past tradition and reputation. The present members do their best to delude themselves and the public into the belief that they are a dare-devil crew, and they take their club and themselves so seriously that I verily believe most of them are persuaded that no four walls in the world contain such a gathering of sad dogs as is to be seen in the dining-room of the Ishmael on their 'house dinner' night. They stick their heads, like so many ostriches, into the sands of the past, and refuse to see that the old order changed and that the members of the Ishmael are Ishmaelites no longer. All that, however, doesn't concern us. If they like to play at Tom and Jerry, they are quite welcome to do it, and if they can make believe so well as to persuade themselves that they are the original and only Toms and Jerrys, why let 'em in Heaven's name, and be hanged to 'em. Our interest in them doesn't hinge on that; but there is one custom of theirs that has been handed



PRIDE THEMSELVES ON BEING BOHEMIANS.

on from what Mr. Hubbock calls 'time immoral' which does concern us and which I must describe to you.

"One of their rules—a very excellent one—is that of 'no long speeches.' Ten minutes is the maximum of time which is allowed to any man, guest or member, prime minister or paragrapher, and to keep this golden rule inviolate the original Ishmaelites initiated a custom which is still religiously followed. At every meeting of the club there is placed on the table in front of the chairman a little metal cube about the size of a pint-pot. When any one rises to speak, the chairman presses a spring at the top of the cube which sets an inside piece of mechanism in motion. This piece of mechanism is timed to run for exactly ten minutes, and if by that time the speaker has not finished and the chairman has not reversed the action, a bell strikes, at the sound of which the speaker, whoever he may be, must sit down. It is a rule that might with advantage be introduced into other institutions. To be interrupted or called to order by a member of one's audience—even by one's chairman—is not pleasant, can accept a pull up from an irresponsible piece of dead mechanism other than good-humoredly."

"But what has this to do with us, you say. Well, I'm coming to it. The 15th of next month is to be a field day with the Ishmaelites, and they have succeeded in nobbling the prince of Wales as their guest. And who do you think is to be the chairman? A gentleman who has been honored with a considerable amount of attention from the syndicate already—no less a personage than our friend Lord Cranthorpe. Gentlemen, wouldn't it be tempting Providence, who has, so to speak, delivered these men into our hands, to let slip such an opportunity of retrieving the failure which attended our previous attempt on the life of Lord Cranthorpe and the royal family? The idea is not mine, but our excellent friend Hubbock's; but I am bound to confess that if he succeeds, as he believes he can, in effecting the assassination of the prince and of Lord Cranthorpe at one stroke, he will have struck a blow at the powers that be, the powers with which we are at enmity, that would immeasurably encourage the anarchist spirit which it is so much to our interest to foster, and that will bring in the subscriptions as nothing else we have attempted lately has done."

"How is it to be managed?" I asked; "and who's to do it?"

"Hubbock offers to take the sole responsibility and the sole risk upon his own shoulders," was the answer. "He knows that it has been a rule of the syndicate that every new councillor shall qualify for the honor and commit himself irrevocably to the responsibility of undertaking a place on the council by undertaking the first piece of risky work that is to be done after his election. It is true that Hubbock has already qualified by undertaking the task of securing the bag tossed out of the window the other day. He hopes and I hope that the fact that he accomplished the difficult enterprise and conveyed and delivered the cash safely and intact into the hands of the council has satisfied the council who at our last meeting raised the question of Hubbock's honesty. I beg pardon, honor. But he is anxious still further to prove his zeal by striking what I am bound to confess seems to me a peculiarly daring and deadly blow at royalty and at the aristocracy. We who constitute this council are paid to wage a war against the upper classes and the capitalists, and if Hubbock succeeds, I think it will go far to satisfy our clients and subscribers that we are giving them something for their money."

"Yes! yes!" interposed Councillor Number Six rather testily, being annoyed, perhaps, at the reference which had been made to him. "It seems to me there's too much jaw about these meetings. You don't need to explain all these things to us over and over again as if we were a pack of school-boys. Ever since we lost our old chief, you jump at any chance of lecturing us, same as some old women do who want to hear their own voices. We all know that to blow up the prince of Wales and the other aristocratic perisher, Lord Cranthorpe, along with him will set business moving in the subscription line and we don't want to be told it all over again at every council meeting. The show ain't a prayer-meeting. The point is, can the things be done? If so, how?"

Number Two took the interruption in better part than I had expected.

"Very well, my friend," he said, good-humoredly. "I don't want to inflict too many details upon you, I'm sure. Only as we all share the responsibility as well as the profits, it seemed only right to me that councillors shall be fully acquainted with what was being done in their name. When you know beforehand how the thing is to be done, you will be able to judge the better whether Hubbock has acquitted himself capably and is deserving of further confidence and trust. I'm very sorry if I have overburdened you with detail. Shall I spare you all the details of Hubbock's

scheme? In that case we can merely empower him to act and let the details make themselves known by reports."

I did not at all approve the turn that things had taken. It was only because I had been apprised beforehand of the conspirators' line of action that I had on more than one occasion been successful in frustrating their projects. But if secrecy were maintained in regard to their proposed operations, the game would be up as far as I was concerned, for unless I knew what move they were about to make, I should not know how to go to work to checkmate them.

"The chief's quite right in insisting upon everything being above board," I said, boldly. "We don't want any hole-and-corner business in a concern like this. We are all like so many mountaineers roped together on a mountain. If one of us makes a slip and the others aren't prepared to set their feet hard and meet the jerk when it comes, the chances are that the lot of us get pulled over the precipice. And mind you, friends, a rope round your body on a mountain is one thing, and a rope round your neck on a scaffold is another. I've sampled one, but I don't want to sample the other. So I think the chief is right in taking us into his confidence as he has done. We all hang by the one rope, so what I say is, 'Let us know where we're going.' Besides, in a concern like this, which claims before all things to be democratic, we don't want any one-man show. Here are we working to overthrow the autocrat or aristocrat wherever you find him, and you propose setting up one man who is to be our pope and lead us all blindfolded by the nose."

"Give us your hand, Number Seven," said Number Six, slapping me familiarly on the shoulder. "It's a good job you ain't a parson, for if I heard you preach a few times, I believe you'd convert me, and I'm damned if I could stand that. I'd no idea we'd got such an orator among us. Anyhow, he's convinced me; so go ahead, chief, and let's have the details in full."

Good humor being thus restored, Number Two continued his explanation.

"The thing is to be done in this way," he said. "Hubbock was once chef at the Ishmael club, and is still friendly with the steward and the other waiters. From one of them he has heard a little secret which is supposed to be known only to the secretary of the club and the committee. The Ishmaelites are very fond of having what I may call unrehearsed effects at the house-dinner evenings, and the member who is in the chair often springs a surprise upon the company by providing some unexpected feature for their entertainment. The secretary—a whimsical fellow—has hit upon an idea which he purposes to carry out on the occasion of the prince's visit. 'Good fellowship' being a sine qua non for election to the Ishmael club, the prince of Wales, who is, as every one knows, the best of good fellows in the social sense, is naturally a prime favorite there. As you all know, the prince is only now recovering from a serious illness, and as his presence at the Ishmael will be his first public appearance after his convalescence, the Ishmaelites intend to give him an ovation. The speech of the evening will be, 'The health of our guest his royal highness the prince of Wales.' Well, the secretary has sent the ten-minute timekeeper to Switzerland to have the ordinary gong replaced by a musical box which shall play 'God Bless the Prince of Wales.' The chairman, in proposing the prince's health, will purposely outstay his ten minutes. The gong will strike, but instead of merely sounding ten warm notes on the bell it will lead off with 'God Bless the Prince of Wales.' As soon as the members 'tumble' to it (for the affair is to be kept secret from all but two or three), the chairman will spring to his feet and take up the air, which will be sung, all standing, and ending up with 'three times three.' That's just the kind of thing to catch on with the Ishmaelites, and I shouldn't be surprised if it proved an immense success and pleased the prince into the bargain."

"Well, Hubbock has contrived—in virtue of his old connection with the club—to get engaged as an assistant chef for the occasion, and he also managed to get a peep at the address on the box that contained the gong, when it was sent off to Switzerland to have the inside mechanism taken out and replaced by a musical box. The address was that of a well-known instrument maker in Geneva to whom Hubbock has since paid a visit. Need I tell you why? It was to get a duplicate gong made—a duplicate, that is to say, so far as the outside is concerned. But it isn't a duplicate inside, for instead of the musical box, Hubbock is getting an infernal machine made from a newly discovered explosive. It is an explosive so death-dealing and terrible that even the small quantity that can be packed away inside the gong will be sufficient to kill every one in its immediate vicinity, and in fact, it is more than probable that it will kill every one in the room. Anyhow, the chairman, our old enemy Lord Cranthorpe, and the prince, who as the guest of the evening will sit on his right, will be as good as dead men. The joke of it is that it will be Lord Cranthorpe himself, who, by winding up the gong—according to the regulations of the club—when he gets upon his legs, will with his own hand put into motion the machinery which will give him and his guest, the prince, as well as a good many of the members, a bare ten minutes more of life. The secretary is no doubt chuckling to himself to think of the stir that his own ingenuity in preparing so pretty a little surprise is likely to make. I think that the surprise which we are preparing for his royal highness, as well as for his lordship and the other members of the club, is likely to make a bigger stir. That, however, we can discuss when the thing's fact accompli. I'm getting shy of counting my chickens before they're hatched, since that miserable jubilee has—o! All the same, I think Hubbock's idea for adding to the evening's entertainment is very curious, and as he is willing and, in fact, anxious to undertake the business, I think that he should be allowed to consider his scheme as under-

our 'distinguished patronage' as the placards put it, and to have our best wishes for his success. Anyhow, there's his programme, and as discussion is freely invited, I hope any of you who have anything to say will speak up."

"It's a very clever little arrangement," said Councillor Number Six, "and what I say is, here's my respects and best wishes to Mr. Hubbock, hoping as he'll go ahead and scoop the trick. What do my other two honorable colleagues say?"

"We say 'ditto,' too," I answered, speaking for myself and for "the silent councillor," to use the name by which I had dubbed the remaining member. "But if Mr. Hubbock and the chief will pardon me for saying so, there's a difficulty ahead which it won't do to overlook."

"What's that?" asked Number Two. "This isn't it very likely after Hubbock has changed the gongs, that some member of the executive of the Ishmael will want to test the mechanism, if only to see that it is in working order? In that case the explosive would be a bit previous. We have no quarrel, I take it, with the members of the Ishmael club as Ishmaelites. In fact, I'm not sure that the members of this council are not exceptionally qualified for membership of a club so-called, and indeed, it occurred to me while the chief was speaking, that the Ishmael club would be a very suitable name for the particular fraternity of which we who are present in this room have the honor of being members."

"You are quite right, my friend," said Number Two, with a laugh. "Hubbock and I both recognized that that would be a ticklish point. But Hubbock's idea is not to change the gongs until the last moment, when the table is laid and ready for the dinner. The Ishmael is a very free and easy place and Hubbock is so well known there that he anticipates no difficulty in finding some excuse to effect the change. I think we may be content to leave it in his hands, since he is willing to undertake all responsibility."

No one demurring to this, Number Two announced that the next meeting of the council would be held in the same place, and at four o'clock in the afternoon of the day following the proposed outrage at the Ishmael club.

"I hope on that occasion," he said, genially, "that we shall be in a position to offer Councillor Hubbock our heartfelt congratulations at having succeeded in blowing his royal highness, the prince of Wales, and the Right Honorable Lord Cranthorpe, M. P., to blazes."

With which humane sentiment the meeting broke up.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE PRINCE OF WALES AT THE ISHMAEL CLUB.

It was the night of the Ishmael club dinner to the prince of Wales, and though the rule by which members are permitted to introduce guests had on this occasion been suspended, the muster of Ishmaelites in their handsome trophy-hung dining room was so great that even a director of the London, Chatham & Dover Railway company would have acknowledged that for once in his life he had met with a genuine case of overcrowding. So democratic a gathering—notwithstanding the fact that the future king of England and emperor of India sat in the midst—is not often to be seen. At the Ishmael, brains and "good fellowship" are counted greater righteousness than "coin" or a coronet. Within its walls all men are equal. To a good fellow, the right hand of fellowship is readily extended. The "stick" will find himself as readily cold-shouldered, and the assumer of "side" may think himself lucky if he be allowed to depart unharmed. To see the Ishmaelites "trail" a sufferer from "swelled head" is to undergo inoculation against that fell malady. The author who has suddenly found a public and as suddenly lost himself, or the moneyed nobody, who has made a successful bid for a baronetage by placing his thousands at the disposal of his political party, would do well to air his new honors elsewhere than at the Ishmael. When such a man is known to be in the house, the word goes round, and to him these trusting children of nature come to be instructed in the secret of his greatness. They sit at his feet and drink in his words of wisdom as if hoping thereby one day to follow—be it ever so humbly—in his footsteps. They ask him artless questions about himself, and when he condescends to gratify their very natural desire to be informed upon so interesting a subject, they tell each other audibly what a great man he is, or sit listening with unconcealed wonder and admiration in their eyes. They beg to be allowed to present to him this or that friend or member who will esteem it a privilege to know so distinguished a person, and when their victim is most swollen—like a human wind-bag—with gratified vanity and a

parent had always been a prime favorite. Whatever their faults may be, they are at least no flunkies, and his popularity with them is in no sense attributable to his exalted position, but to their regard for him as a man. If there is one man in all England who may be pardoned for allowing a flatterer to get the blind side of him, it is surely he whose every wish on whom it is the business of those about him to humor. Yet if there is one man in England who is absolutely inaccessible to flattery, it is the genial, generous, but keen-eyed prince. The Ishmaelites know well, and they love him for it, just as they hail him prince of good fellows, and the best and most honest hate of sham and humbug in the country.

Hence the dinner which was being given in his honor was the most brilliant and at the same time the heartiest function that the club house has ever witnessed. Brains, pluck and good-fellowship—these are what the Ishmaelites most delight to honor; but being a British club, they put bravery before even brains, and at the high table that night sat wearers of the Victoria cross, leaders of forlorn hopes, admirals who had saved life as well as fought the enemy at sea, explorers, travelers and soldiers, who with a handful of fellows, had held an impossible position or not hesitated to face a three outnumbering force.

Everything had gone without a hitch, and there was no denying that the function was a magnificent success. The prince, still pale from his recent illness, was, it was easy to see, both touched and gratified by the genuinely enthusiastic and affectionate greeting which had been accorded to him; and never had he looked more thoroughly at home than when hobnobbing with the Ishmaelites.

Dinner being finished, and the permission, Brother Ishmaelites, you may smoke, being given forth and then received with the customary yell, the chairman rose in his place to make the speech of the evening, by proposing the prince's health. Another yell greeted the placing of the ten-minute bell before him, and yet another the setting of the machinery in motion. Then he began his speech. Nothing of the sort could have been happier, for there was not a false note throughout. He claimed for the prince our most illustrious personage's due; and yet he referred to him as a man, a sportsman and a good fellow, that the Ishmaelites not forget him again and again with fitting cheers.

The announcement—the unexpected announcement—that the prince and that evening expressed his wish to become a member of the club and a Brother Ishmaelite, brought the enthusiasm to the culminating point; but the welcome words had scarcely passed the chairman's lips before the first stroke of the ten-minute gong was heard, and the sound he held up the customary silencing hand and dropped back into his chair.

The rule of the club is that when the gong strikes, the speaker, whoever he may be, at once resumes his seat, and every one sits in silence until the ten strokes have sounded, when members are at liberty to give expression to their feelings, a privilege of which they avail themselves by yelling, howling and hurling epithets, and even match-boxes, cigar-ends, or anything else which may be handy at the offender who has transgressed their time-honored ten-minute rule.

Hence when Lord Cranthorpe relapsed into his seat there was a sudden hush while the members waited dutifully for the ten strokes to sound. Half a dozen seconds had not throbbed away before the Ishmaelites became aware that something out of the ordinary—but what they did not know—was happening. There was a flutter of repressed excitement. Then some one called out "Hush!" and the silence became electric. What was that sprinkling of bird-song music that percolated the smoke-hung atmosphere as if fairy hands were flinging the largest of tiny wafer-like silver coins for all to gather? "Hush!" some one said impatiently again. Expectation stood on tiptoe, as every ear was strained and every face became alert and expectant.

Note by note the thin thread of music rippled out. It was recognized, and a tremendous cheer set rattling the trophies on the wall as the chairman rose and with a wave of his hand above his head took up the strain. In another second every man was on his feet, and "God Bless the Prince of Wales" was being sung as it had never been sung before.

"With heart and voice awaken
Those minstrel strains of yore,
Till Britain's name and glory
Resound from shore to shore,
From all our ancient mountains,
And from our lovely valleys,
O let the prayer re-echo—
God bless the prince of Wales!"

The secretary's little unrehearsed effect was a huge success. Perhaps the prince's illness had left him somewhat weak and shaky, for as the hymn concluded with the most deafening "Three times three," and yet again "Three times three," that ever left human ears buzzing and human hearts thumping, the kindly eyes of that right royal prince of good fellows were suspiciously bright, and when in a few manly words he thanked his "brother Ishmaelites" for the greeting that had been accorded to him, there was just the ghost of a tremble in the voice that is generally so firm and strong.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Too Risky.
Briggs—I don't know whether to play golf, Sunday, or go to church.
Griggs—Why not be guided by your conscience?
Briggs—But I don't dare run the risk.—Brooklyn Life.

Same Material.
Mrs. Jiggins—My! They make car wheels out of paper! The Ideal Paper car wheels!
Jiggins—That's nothing. They make stationary engines, too.—Browning.